

DISCOURSE

BY PRESIDENT BRIGHAM YOUNG. BOWERY,
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[REPORTED BY GEO. D. WATT.]

I will read a revelation printed in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and given in Zion in August, 1831. It was given in Independence, Jackson county, Missouri, I think during the first time that Joseph was in that land. (The President read the revelation, section 18.)

I do not anticipate, in the few remarks that I shall make, throwing any particular light upon this revelation, especially to those who are acquainted with the circumstances under which it was given.

When revelations are given through an individual appointed to receive them, they are given to the understandings of the people. These revelations, after a lapse of years, become mystified to those who were not personally acquainted with the circumstances at the time they were given.

The revelation that I have been reading may be as mysterious to our children, in a thousand or fifteen hundred years from now, in case the world continues in the same degree of enlightenment that it has for a few ages past, as the revelations contained in the Old and New Testaments are to this generation, and it would be commented upon with the same scrutiny and accuracy; and men would study, year after year, and fret themselves almost to death to find out the mysterious meaning of the revelation given to us their forefathers.

This revelation is as plain and clear to the understandings of those who know the circumstances that called it forth, as it would be for you to understand me should I talk about making a canal to bring the waters of Big Cottonwood to this city for irrigating our gardens and the farming lands. It is plain and easy to be understood, it is familiar to us who were in that country at the time, we know all about it.

But a portion of this congregation have not been personally acquainted with the early experience and travels of this church, and with the sayings and doings of the prophet Joseph, and it may be that they do not fully understand what this revelation really does mean.

They do not actually know that there is such a place as Independence in Jackson county, Missouri; they have heard of it, and may have an idea that it is situated in the regions where angels dwell.

The revelation which I have read was perfectly plain, and could be readily understood by all the brethren then in Jackson county, Missouri, and in Kirtland, Ohio, as easily as you can understand me when I talk about digging canals, building dwellings, tabernacles, temples, and store-houses, or when I talk about drawing sand and clay, burning lime, etc.

Is it strange or is it not strange, to people endowed with wisdom, that the inhabitants of the earth, beclouded as they are, should have such revelations given to them? Is it strange or is it not strange that they should reject them?

Would this be a hard question for the congregation to answer? Looking at these things after the manner of the wisdom of the world we say that it would be very strange indeed, as a certain professor would say, "it would be passing strange."

It would be strange indeed should people receive such ideas, upon such subjects, as revelations from God, from the Supreme of the Universe, the Great Eloheim, the Creator and upholder of all things, who is enthroned in eternity in glory and in power, yet who condescends to talk about such matters as building store-houses, sending men to do this or that, to go to this or that land, to gather up money for this or that purpose. And very many would exclaim, "O, it is money, money, money."

That has been the cry continually from the enemies of the kingdom of God. You know that was the cry in the days of Joseph. "O, he is after money, you can see this in all his revelations; money, money, money; he wants to get your money. He pretends it is going into the hands of the bishop to purchase lands, but when he gets hold of it you do not get it again. It is money, money, money, all the time."

The commands to go and buy this or that farm, to build houses, sell out a farm here and rent one there, take a mission to preach the gospel to the world, gather money to purchase lands, and divide with the poor brethren are all familiar talk with us, easy to be understood, and without mystery.

When Joseph received this revelation it was as plain to the understanding of the saints, as are my instructions when telling you what to do.

The Lord said to the people, through Joseph, you must keep the law here, and be careful to repent of your sins. Occasionally a man's name would be mentioned, and he might be pointed out as a pattern for the rest.

Do you repent of your sins? If you do not, you will be overcome by the enemy. He said to the people, repent of your sins and keep the law, or you will have no inheritance in this region.

Many who are here now owned farms there, and some owned large tracts of land. Have you possession of them now? You have not. You may be rightful owners of those lands, but you are not the possessors. There are many in this congregation who own the right of the soil there, that is to say, if the government of the United States could or would give any right to it.

The Lord said, repent of your sins, or you cannot stay here and receive your inheritance; and this land will not be given to the saints until they are scourged and driven from city to

city. This is plain, and every person can understand it.

As there are persons named in the revelation which I have read, to whom I wish to refer more particularly, I will again read a portion of it:

"Now, as I spake concerning my servant Edward Partridge, this land is the land of his residence and those whom he has appointed for his counselors, and also the land of the residence of him whom I have appointed to keep my store-house; wherefore let them bring their families to this land, as they shall counsel between themselves and me, for behold it is not meet that I should command in all things, for he that is compelled in all things the same is a slothful and not a wise servant, wherefore he receiveth no reward."

Here are two characters pointed out, br. Partridge and another whose name is not mentioned here, but whose name was Gilbert, and who was appointed keeper of the store-house.

You can understand what this plain revelation meant, and it will come home to your comprehension. "For behold it is not meet that I should command in all things, for he that is compelled in all things the same is a slothful and not a wise servant." Those men whose names are mentioned were considered to be as holy, I may say, as any men in the world.

I am a witness, so far as this is concerned, that the persons whose names are mentioned, and many others of the first elders of the church, were looked upon almost as angels. They were looked upon by the young members as being so filled with the spirit and power of God, that we were hardly worthy to converse with them. You hear the names of Bishop Partridge, of br. W. W. Phelps, who is now sitting in this stand, of Parly P. Pratt, of David Whitmer, of Oliver Cowdery, and the names of many others of the first elders who had been up to Zion, and I declare to you that brethren in other parts of the land, those who had not seen the persons named, felt that should they come into their presence they would have to pull off their shoes, as the ground would be so holy upon which they trod.

Do you know what distance and age accomplish? They produce in people the most reverential awe that can be imagined.

When we reflect and rightly understand, we learn how easy of comprehension the gospel is, how plain it is in its plan, in every part and principle fitted perfectly to the capacity of mankind, inasmuch that when it is introduced among the lovers of truth it appears very easy and very plain, and how very ready the honest are to receive it.

But send it abroad and give it antiquity, and it is at once clothed with mystery. This is the case with all the ancient revelations. Those which were received and understood by the ancients are shrouded in mystery and uncertainty to this generation, and men are employed to reveal the meaning of the ancient scriptures.

The people on every hand are inquiring, "What does this scripture mean, and how shall we understand this or that passage?" Now I wish, my brethren and sisters, for us to understand things precisely as they are, and not as the flitting, changing imagination of the human mind may frame them.

The Bible is just as plain and easy of comprehension as the revelation which I have just read to you, if you understand the Spirit of God, the spirit of revelation, and know how the gospel of salvation is adapted to the capacity of weak man.

If you could see things as they are, you would know that the whole plan of salvation and all the revelations ever given to man on the earth are as plain as would be the remarks of an elder, were he to stand here and talk about our every day business.

I want you to understand this, that you may know how to understandingly read the Bible and the revelations delivered to you in your own generation, and how to honor your religion and your God.

When you read the revelations, or when you hear the will of the Lord concerning you, for your own sakes never receive that with a doubtful heart. This is a matter that I have frequently impressed upon the people here; I have exhorted them from year to year upon this very point, and have asked, why do you receive the counsel of God with doubtful hearts when you are taught the way of life and salvation, when things are made so plain and easy to you that you cannot misunderstand them? Why do you admit of such unbelief in your hearts and feelings as to say—"this or that is beneath the notice of the Almighty, and say that he does not deal in such simple, small and every day affairs?"

Why say, "We want to hear from the stand concerning the mysteries, the eternal mysteries of the kingdom of God, that which we have never heard?" I might say to such, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Is it a mystery to you, sisters, how to knit a stocking? You all answer, "no, not at all." But bring an individual from a world where they never had stockings, and it is as much of a mystery to that person, as any thing you have ever thought of could be to you, because he would be perfectly ignorant of all ideas pertaining to that art.

You may now be inclined to say, "O, this is too simple and childlike, we wish to hear the mysteries of the kingdoms of the Gods who have existed from eternity, and of all the kingdoms in which they will dwell; we desire to have these things portrayed to our understandings."

Allow me to inform you that you are in the midst of it all now, that you are in just as good a kingdom as you will ever attain to, from now to all eternity, unless you make it

yourselves by the grace of God, by the will of God, by the eternal priesthood of God, which is a code of laws perfectly calculated to govern and control eternal matter. If you and I do not by this means make that better kingdom which we anticipate, we shall never enjoy it.

We can only enjoy the kingdom we have labored to make. If you say that you want mysteries, commandments and revelations, I reply that scarcely a Sabbath passes over your heads, those of you who come here, without your having the revelations of Jesus Christ poured upon you like water on the ground.

"Why do you not write them, brother Brigham?" I will tell you one reason why—I expect that they will be one of these days, but I expect that you will have them written when God and his faithful servants have suffered enough from the ignorance, foolishness, wickedness and slothfulness of the people, from their slowness of heart to believe, and from their unrighteous dealing one with another.

Then I expect that there will be just revelation enough given and written to cut all the ungodly off from the church, and send them to hell. The reason it is not given now, is because of the mercy the Lord still sees fit to extend towards them.

You recollect that last Sabbath, and two weeks ago to-day, I told the people that it would be for their good to go and perform a certain piece of work, which was just as much revelation to you as would be teachings upon the subject of getting your endowment. It was life, and was upon the principles of eternal lives. I recollect telling you, when you lift your hands to heaven like that (raising his hand) and say that you will perform thus and so and do not, that such a course would damn you, as sure as you are now living. Men and women ought to fulfill all their covenants.

I exhorted the brethren not to say that they would do the work, unless they intended to go and do it, for if they did not, I said they would be cursed.

I am almost constrained by the power that is within me to draw the dividing line in the midst of this people, and to cut many from the church, but I plead for mercy. I have mercy for the people, and I ask God to bear with the wickedness there is in their midst, which can hardly be borne with by the spirit and power of the Holy Ghost.

I said, two weeks ago to-day, that some of you would be cursed, but have you ever heard me curse the people? You have not, though I have to hang, as it were, on a slender thread of faith to plead with the Almighty to yet spare the wicked in our midst. What hinders them from observing the law of God? Do I or does any other person hinder them? Who hinders you from doing a good work? I am wearied with seeing the conduct of some of this people, their thieving, lying, tattling, deceiving, running after the gentile spirit, after the spirits of this world, receiving delusive spirits and adhering to all manner of principles that are not of God.

What hinders us in living as close to our religion as do the angels? Angels do not hinder us, God certainly does not, and we ought to say to devils, "you shall not." But in the midst of this people there is a set of thieves, idolaters, drunkards, whoremongers and vile persons. It may be asked, "shall we not draw the dividing line soon?" Yes, some will in due time get line enough to send them to hell. Many are pleading for revelations; do you suppose that saints lack revelations? They have plenty of them, and they are stored in the archives of those who have understanding of the principles of the priesthood, ready to be brought forth as the people need. I will again read a portion of the revelation, "for he that is compelled in all things the same is a slothful and not a wise servant, wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness, for the power is in them wherein they are agents unto themselves, and inasmuch as men do good they shall in no wise lose their reward."

There is one principle that I do wish the people would observe, that is, do not ask God to give you knowledge, when you are confident that you will not keep and rightly improve upon that knowledge. It is a mercy in God that many are as ignorant as they are, for were it not so they would not be borne with as they are. Do not ask for revelations to dictate you in this, that, or the other, unless you are sure that you can obey them. Do not suffer yourselves to falter in your faith, and to say that the door of revelation is closed, for I tell you that there are now too many for your good, unless you hearken more diligently than you have hitherto, unless you apply more closely in your lives what is revealed and live your religion more faithfully.

You are frequently told that the chastisements which come upon this people are for their good. We may ask "is pinching want for our good? Is the destruction of our crops for our good? Is the losing of our property for our good?" Who will lay it to heart? Who will realize it? There are a few who will. I can say with safety that I firmly believe that there are five wise virgins and five foolish ones; that there are five who are wise servants and hand-maidens to five who are foolish. But in looking at the people in mass this may not appear, for you are frequently told that one evil person can corrupt many. It is an old saying, and a true one, that "a wicked king can corrupt a nation," and a wicked father will corrupt a family, and a wicked ruler will corrupt those he rules over. We wish to be one, but "evil communications corrupt good manners." Unrighteous dealings and doings appear to exert

a wider influence than righteous ones, consequently in this community when you find one evil person in a family, or in a neighborhood, that person will actually make it appear to a stranger that the whole family, or neighborhood, is evil. The good and evil are mixed together, the wheat and the tares are growing together, the wise and foolish virgins are traveling on together. Some of the people are actually foolish, and they think that the Lord looks upon sin with a great deal of compassion, and are thinking, "O, if I should do this or that I will be forgiven. Yes, I will go and tell it all to the heads of the church and get their forgiveness, and pass on in my wickedness." Do you wish your friends to stay here, and all to be saints indeed? Now some children are wicked and their parents righteous, and again children may be saints and their parents wicked. There are good people who have wicked brothers and sisters, and they say, "let us be forgiving, let us hold on to them, we have compassion, perhaps they will do better and repent of their sins, and yet be saints." Is this not the feeling of every heart? It is, more or less. Who is there entirely void of these compassionate feelings? Father, save your son if possible; save your daughter, parents, if it is possible; brothers, save your brethren, if it is possible, save your sisters, if it is possible; save this man, or that woman, and let us have mercy on them, we will be compassionate on them.

A great many come to me and say, "I wish to do exactly as the Lord shall direct through you, brother Brigham;" if I had the word of the Lord I would not dare give it to them, unless I knew it was an absolute duty. They never would obey it, because they are taught the word of the Lord here all the time, but do they hearken to it? Those who have wisdom within themselves, who have in possession the spirit of the gospel, know what they hear from this stand. They know truth from error, they are satisfied, and never ask the Lord to give them more revelation, but to give them grace to observe and keep what they have received.

You can perceive what kind of characters they are who need to be commanded, they are slothful and not wise servants. Many of you may inquire why I am urging this point to-day; because it is necessary, it ought to be done. I wish those who are Saints to walk uprightly before their God, and to do everything they can for their brethren who are not Saints. I desire every man and woman to exercise themselves to the utmost, for they will, in all probability, be lost unless we save them. You come to me and want to know the will of God, what for? It would send you to hell, as likely as not, for you will not do it, and that would lay the foundation for your condemnation, as it is written, "those that receive the commandments of God and do not do them are damned." I feel to urge these things upon the people that they may save themselves, that they may be industrious and go to with a ready heart and willing mind, with all their might, to do the things that are necessary to be done.

Suppose that the Lord should give you a written revelation through me, I am satisfied that it would not infringe upon your planting corn, sowing wheat and watering in the season thereof. The very first thing would be to instruct the people to take care of their temporal lives, for if a people do not provide to live on the earth they cannot accomplish the work given them to do. The first thing to be written would be for people to prepare to live on the earth, until they could overcome the wickedness that is in the world.

This would be dictating you in your temporal affairs; I can dictate you in those matters, and if the Lord does not move me to the point of drawing the dividing line, though if he does I expect to be on hand, let us go to with all our might and do every good work we can, and be satisfied and not be continually grumbling and complaining against the Lord and teasing him for more than you know what to do with.

I could not, nor could any other man, give a revelation that would be more plain to the comprehension of the people than the one I have read to you this morning. There is no mystery about it, nothing mysterious or in the dark, but every man may easily know precisely what it means; all the people may understand it to perfection. This revelation was given to the people in their ignorance; it was given, we may say, at the birth of the man child, in the first days of the being of the priesthood again upon the earth, and yet it was so calculated and so worded that every person could understand it. Br. Partridge knew what to do; Gilbert, Rigdon and Peterson knew what to do, and in returning to Kirtland the elders were to lift up their voices by the way, and to build up churches.

One man is told to do this, and another to do that. Edward, you go and get your family and move them up here, etc. Can you understand this? It is one of the revelations of God, given to this people in the first rise of the church. I do not expect to give you any particular light upon it by way of illustration, for it would be like my telling you that the sun shines, and that we are within the walls of this Temple block, seated under a partial shade constructed for screening us from the rays of the sun. You know all this, you understand it as well as I do; so did those to whom it was given understand this revelation. Would you understand what might be said to you, if I should command you to do this or that? Ask some man to command you, and never ask God to do it, until you are prepared to keep his commandments.

You are ready to say in your hearts, "we are always scolded." Who hurts you? You will never be hurt, unless you hurt yourselves. If we live our religion we shall prosper, and if we live in the neglect of our duty and continue to